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ABSTRACT

This study examined the cognitive representations of culture contact situations for second-generation immigrant and non-immigrant youth to identify differences between socially and individually oriented cultures. Subjects were 8 immigrant and 8 non-immigrant female secondary students with an average age of 17.44 years selected from 156 students of a German multicultural school; half of each group had an extreme individual or social orientation as assessed by a German version of the Indol Scale. The critical incidents technique was used to provoke statements about marriage decisions and conflict resolution strategies in a setting of culture-bound communication. Results indicated that both immigrant and non-immigrant students viewed love as an important reason for marriage, but non-immigrant students expected parents' influence to be minimal and immigrant students accepted and did not question parents' and normative influences. Only individually oriented non-immigrant students mentioned that peers had little impact on the individual, but other groups saw peers as an important influence. For socially oriented non-immigrants and individually oriented immigrants, peers are a frame of reference for the reflection of arguments. Socially oriented immigrant students preferred to avoid criticism. Non-immigrant students attempted to resolve conflict by persisting in their opinions in order to convince others. Immigrant students expected peers to give social support to the individual and saw family as highly influential through life. Non-immigrant and individually oriented immigrant students used primary control beliefs to handle conflict, whereas socially oriented immigrant students showed secondary control beliefs in handling conflicts and adapted individual needs to the family values. (KDFB)

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The Handling of Conflict by Adolescent Female Youth:

The Difference Made by Experiences in Acculturation

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Because there is a lack of knowledge on how to improve cross-cultural interaction and cross-cultural education, further investigations in the field of cognitive and social development in multicultural contexts is needed. The impact multicultural contexts have on development, is as yet not well investigated (Trommsdorff, 1993). The aim of the following study is to investigate one aspect of the culture-contact between socially and individually oriented cultures as reflected by cognitive representations of culture contact situations: Are there differences between second generation migrant youth and non-migrant youth in culture-contact situations?

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1. Are there differences between migrant and non-migrant youth in the concepts considered influential in deciding to marry within the acculturation context?
2. Are there differences between migrant and non-migrant youth in the expected social distance in conflicting peer groups?
3. Are there differences between migrant and non-migrant youth in handling conflict and the control orientation?

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Introduction

Cultural differences in the priority of personal attributes of spouses

Culture exerts a substantial influence on partners preferred. The most remarkable difference between cultures emerges in the evaluation of chastity. The importance of characteristics such as good house keeper and the desire for home and children also differs between cultures. Two central dimensions have been found by Buss (1990): Traditional versus modern orientation and education and intelligence versus pleasing position. Beyond these major dimensions each cultural group showed unique preferences in ordering the importance of attributes of spouses. In spite of the differences, Buss found strong communalities, nearly all cultural groups rated mutual attraction and love as the top characteristics. Characteristics such as dependability, emotional stability, kindness, understanding and intelligence were also highly valued. Specific sex differences occurred, but the overall effects of sex did not have the same impact as culture.

Cultural differences with respect to love as a prerequisite for marriage

Strong cross cultural differences were found in the perceived importance of love as a prerequisite for establishing a marriage (Levine et al., 1995). Love tended to be of greatest importance in Western and Westernized nations and of less importance in Eastern nations. A high correlation between individual orientation and the importance of love for the establishment of marriage was reported. Economic living standards were found to be very strongly related to beliefs about love. More freedom of choice in countries with high living standards was reported than in those with low standards.

Cultural differences in marriage behaviour according to individual and social orientations

Differences in marriage behaviour are reported by Triandis (1994) between individually and socially oriented cultures. In individually oriented cultures people look for **an „exciting personality"** while in socially oriented countries people look for a **„good homemaker / provider"** and **„virginity"**. Individually oriented persons select partners according to what their heart says, socially oriented persons select partners according to who fits to their collective.

Cultural differences in the relationships with family and peers according to social and individual orientations

The cultural variable individual orientation versus social orientation has been adopted in a wide range of psychological research.

Characteristics of ...

	individual orientation	**social orientation**
family	• ties amongst individuals are loose, they are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family	• from birth onwards individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioned loyality
	• individuals emphasize personal goals	• individuals emphasize goals, values and norms of the collective
	• ties with the family are loose	• ties with the family are close, family behaviour is restrictive in discipline, but warm in emotional atmosphere
	• the self is defined independently from the collective	• the self is defined in terms of in-group relationships
	• values: independence, autonomy	• values: harmony, face-saving
	• criticism is expressed directly	• criticism is expressed indirectly
peers	• behaviour is explained by personal preferences	• behaviour is explained as reflecting norms

Cultural differences in locus of control

Primary and secondary control describe the perceived control of a person in different situations. Weisz (1984) mentions, that control beliefs differ between cultures.

Characteristics of ...

primary control	secondary control
• attempt to influence reality actively, so that it corresponds to one's own goals and wishes	• attempt to adapt one's goals and wishes to the conditions of context
• actively and dominantly influencing the environment while the main goal is achieving and maintaining personal autonomy	• personal goals can be changed in order to adapt to the environment, individuality and autonomy are subordinated to the circumstances
• cultures that value autonomy and individuality very highly, should prefer primary control	• cultures that value adaptation to the goals of the group very highly, should prefer secondary control

Cultural differences in adolescence

Development is seen as the consecutive accomplishment of developmental tasks. The content and definition of developmental tasks differs culturally and historically. Because cultures differ in their definition of developmental goals, there are different control beliefs and patterns of interpretation.

Cultural differences between adolescents of residential culture and of second generation migrants

Cultural differences in developmental orientations between residents and adolescents of second generation migrants were found by Feldmann & Rosenthal (1990). Anglo-saxon adolescents favoured values of individual orientation, Asiatic adolescents favoured the cultural values of their countries of origin. The age at which adolescents became independent differed beween those of Anglo-saxon origin and those of Asiatic origin.

Conflicts in migrant families

Until recently conflicts between parents and adolescents have been overestimated. The same is true for intergenerational conflicts in migrant families (Silbereisen et al., 1993). However, if migrant adolescents identify themselves explicitly with the values and norms of the residential culture, while the parents still cling to their own cultural traditions, tensions and conflicts within the family are to be expected (Rick & Forward, 1992).

Subjects

8 migrant and 8 non-migrant female secondary students (average age: 17,44 years) were interviewed after having been selected by a German version of the Indol-Scale (Hui & Triandis, 1986) from among 156 students of a multicultural school because of their extreme individual or social orientations. Half of the students were second generation immigrants with family background emphasizing group loyalities. The other half consisted of German residents with family backgrounds emphasizing individual loyalities.

156 students → Indol scale → 16 female students

↓

	individually oriented	socially oriented
migrant student	4	4
non-migrant student	4	4

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Method

In order to analyze implicit cognitive models of intercultural conflicts, adolescent female students were involved in a conflict situation focussing on marriage concepts by means of the critical incidents technique. The situation was constructed to provoke statements about the reasons for the decision to marry and about conflict resolution strategies in a setting of culture bound communication. The conflict situation that students had to react to projectively, was developed from previous conversations in a multicultural school.

The story....
Fatima, an 18 year old Moroccan student and her boyfriend want to marry. When Fatima comes to tell her classmates her decision to marry, some of them do not understand her. Some of them try to convince her to abandon her plan. There is a violent dispute in the class. Fatima is annoyed.

The analysis of the guided interviews aimed at the reconstruction of the cognitive models of the students. It was realized qualitatively according to the grounded theory of Strauss (1991), to saturate the resultant model.

RESULTS

The resultant models of the different cultural groups are presented in the following tables.

individually oriented non-migrant students

concepts seen as influential in deciding to marry	
categories	content
norms	• cultural and religious norms are clearly rejected
romantic love	• love is an important reason for marriage
culture	• cultural background influences decisions to marry
personal goals	• being sure of one's decision is important
personal autonomy	• strong personality and autonomous decisions are important for decisions to marry
family	• parents are only mentioned in passing in relation to decision to marry
peers	• social relationships with peers are of minor importance with respect to personal decisions • perceived social distance to peers is great

individually oriented non-migrant students

strategies for handling conflict	
categories	content
interaction between the individual and family	• if family is mentioned at all, it is used to contrast the individual's values
interaction between the individual and peers	• peers serve as comparison to contrast one's own opinion and to affirm one's own decision • individual rejects criticism actively • persisting in one's opinion will convince others • individual uses conflict to confirm the decision • individual uses conflict to identify real friends • individual does not allow peers to influence decision, because the individual decides autonomously • peers should accept individual's decision without discussion
action orientation	• social and argumentative bargaining does not influence individual's action • strong individual bound orientation on action
control beliefs	• primary orientation

socially oriented non-migrant students

concepts seen as influential in deciding to marry	
categories	content
norms	• cultural and religious norms are not mentioned
romantic love	• love is seen as an important reason for marriage, but free will and independence is even more important
culture	• cultural background influences marriage decision • common culture is seen as a factor linking partners
personal goals	• being sure of one's decision is important
personal autonomy	• decision of one's own free will and personal autonomy are important for marriage
family	• parents are only mentioned in passing, but are not central for decisions to marry
peers	• relationship to peers is important

socially oriented non-migrant students

strategies for handling conflicts	
categories	content
interaction between the individual and family	• parents influence decisions to marry, but without pressure
interaction between the individual and peers	• peers serve as frame of reference for reflecting arguments • persisting in one's opinion will convince others • individual should communicate cultural and personal background of his/her behavior • conflict evokes reflection-processes in peers
action orientation	• individual and peers are seen as active self determined persons
control beliefs	• primary orientation

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individually oriented migrant students

concepts seen as influential in deciding to marry	
categories	content
norms	• cultural norms are accepted explicitly or implicitly
romantic love	• if romantic love is mentioned as reason for marriage, this happens only in connection with a need for security and affiliation
culture	• cultural background influences decision to marry
personal goals	• being sure of one's decision is important
personal autonomy	
family	• interrelationships in the family are expected to be conflicting
peers	• relationships with peers are described as intimate and important • loyality to the family is more important than loyality to peers

individually oriented migrant students

strategies for handling conflict	
categories	content
interaction between the individual and family	• marriage is seen functionally, as way out of family conflicts
interaction between the individual and peers	• peers serve as frame of reference for the reflection of arguments • peers serve as social support • disputes with peers are important for individual's decision • conflict evokes reflection-processes in peers • peers are utilized to reduce individual's feeling of insecurity
action orientation	• individual and peers are seen as active, self determined persons
control beliefs	• primary orientation

socially oriented migrant students

concepts seen as influential in deciding to marry	
categories	content
norms	• cultural norms are accepted and not questioned
romantic love	• love is only mentioned in passing as reason for marriage
culture	• cultural background influences decisions to marry
personal goals	• being sure of one's decision is important
personal autonomy	
family	• intimate family contact is important
peers	• loyality to the family is more important than loyality to peers

socially oriented migrant students

strategies for handling conflicts	
categories	content
interaction between the individual and family	• marriage is seen as a means of creating a new family
interaction between the individual and peers	• peers serve as social support • criticism by peers should be avoided
action orientation	• individual's needs are adapted to accomodate the values of the family
control beliefs	• secondary orientation

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Results according to the questions of investigation

1. Non-migrant students see love as an important reason for marriage, whereas parents' influence on individuals' decisions to marry is expected to be minimal. The decision to marry is not influenced by norms, but free will and autonomy are important.
Migrant students also see love as an important reason for marriage, but the influence that parents and norms exert on the decision to marry are accepted and not questioned.
All students see cultural background as important for the decision to marry and they all evaluate being sure of one's decision as important. Individually oriented migrant students see marriage as a way out of the conflicting family.

2. Only individually oriented non-migrant students mention, that peers have little impact on the individual, the other groups see peers as important for the individual. Migrant students expect loyality to the family to be more important than loyality to the peers.

3. For socially oriented non-migrants and individually oriented migrants, peers serve as frame of reference for the reflection of arguments and the conflict evokes refelction-processes in peers. For individually oriented non-migrant students peers and family serve to contrast their own opinions, the distance between the individual and peers is expected to be great. Socially oriented migrant students prefer the avoidance of criticism. Non-migrant students attempt to achieve conflict resolution by persisting on their opinions, in order to convince others.
Migrant students expect peers to give social support to the individual and see the family as highly influential for the individual's life. Conflict handling by individually oriented migrant and all non-migrant students is dominated by primary control beliefs, only socially oriented migrant students show secondary control beliefs in their handling of conflicts, in the sense of adapting the individual's needs to the values of the family context.

Discussion

Decisions to marry

For non-migrant students love, free will and independence seem to be important reasons to marry, whereas migrant students rate norms, family and a need for security as more important in decisions to marry. The differences found could be interpreted as follows: non-migrants cling to individually oriented values and migrants cling to socially oriented values in their decisions to marry.

Handling conflict

In handling conflicts female adolescents refer to different contexts: the peers, the family and their own person. Of the four cultural groups distinguished, each group emphasizes different contexts. The differences occur in the function that they ascribe to each social context in the cognitive treatment of the conflict.

Different emphases in conflict resolutions

	peers	family	own person
individually oriented non-migrant students			
socially oriented non-migrant students			
individually oriented migrant students			
socially oriented migrants students			

strong emphasis some emphasis irrelevant

For socially oriented non-migrants and individually oriented migrants discussions with peers serve to reflect one's own arguments. In other word they show a greater need for intimate relationships with the peers and for feedback from peers. Interaction with peers seems to have very special significance for these two groups, although both groups also consider the family to be important. The family context is more significant for socially oriented migrants in resolving conflicts. Peers should only support the decision that has been made and should not criticize it at all. Individually oriented non-migrants show a need for independence both from the family and the peers in their handling conflict, but they use peers and the family as contrasts for their own opinions.

For non-migrants and individually oriented migrants peers serve as comparison and as confirmation of their own person. Socially oriented migrants need peers as social support, whereas conflict resolution seems to happen within the family context.

Active persuasion of peers in order to resolve conflict is only mentioned by non-migrants. Migrants show little interest in convincing others. Maybe migrants value „harmony" very highly so that they feel no need for all peers to share the same opinion about the problem. Non-migrants seem to use arguments and conflicts to find out who their „friend" is and who their „enemy" is.

Because of their social orientation, socially oriented non-migrants seem to have more opportunities to examine the social situation of migrants and show more openness for different cultural contexts. Because of their need for autonomy and independence individually oriented non-migrants may not have the same opportunity to have intimate exchanges with distinct cultural contexts.

Individually oriented migrants have some elements in common with non-migrants such as primary orientation and argumentative bargaining with peers. Their expectation of conflicts in the family may indicate that they experience conflicts within their families. According to the findings of Rick and Forward (1992) it could be presumed, that they have allready adapted to the values of the residential culture to a greater extent than their parents. For that reason they experience differences between their own and their

parents' values and consequently they have following more conflicts in their families. Socially oriented migrants do not mention family conflicts at all. Because of their secondary orientation and their strong family orientation they may not have adapted to the residential culture in the same way, individually oriented migrants seem to have done. The socially oriented cultural background of the socially oriented migrants seems to have a strong influence on the values of this group, whereas individually oriented migrants seem to be influenced by the residential culture to a greater extent.